SCIENCE & GOVERNMENT REPORT

The Independent Bulletin of Science Policy

Vol. VII, No. 9 | P.O. Box 6226A, Washington, D.C. 20015 | May 15, 1977

A Talk with the President's Science Adviser

Three months on the job as Jimmy Carter's science adviser, Frank Press sees one issue dominating all others "for the next few years" in Washington's multi-billion-dollar relationship with the American scientific enterprise: the President's vowed reorganization of the US government.

"It gives us an opportunity for the first searching examination of the government's structure for science and technology," Press said in an hour-long talk with SGR. With the reorganization studies just getting underway, Press said that he has not arrived at any firm conclusions as to how research and development might be shaped. But he repeatedly expressed the view that the system lacks "coherence," and that the budgetary process plus administrative uniformity offer promising

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means for dealing with that lack. He also scoffed at the widely held view that reorganization fervor will fade as the new Administration settles into office. "Carter," he said, "is unwavering on certain things, like human rights. Reorganization is one of those things. It's not going to disappear."

"The big problem for science and technology," he said, "is how do you get a coherent organization? You can't pull technology out of the Defense Department and put it in a Department of Science. EPA (the Environmental Protection Agency) needs its own laboratories. You can't pull it all out and make it autonomous."

The diversity is useful, in many respects, he continued, but it also produces difficulties. For example, patent policies differ among various federal agencies, as do overhead policies. There is no reason, he added, that the government's relations with the R&D community have to involve widely differing administrative practices among the agencies.

As for the financing of R&D, Press indicated that government-wide reorganization presents a unique opportunity for promoting coherence. "Carter says," he noted, "that we should think of government first and territoriality second. Well, on that basis, there could be great flexibility in the federal budget for R&D if we think of it as a whole, rather than as individual budgets for individual agencies."

With federal funds for R&D now over $24 billion a year, he said, there should be opportunities for shifting funds to meet particular needs. Basic research, he said, is particularly vulnerable to harm from sudden financial fluctuations; on the other hand, demonstration projects can usually be stretched out without serious harm. "If we had the flexibilityy to shift when necessary one per cent of demonstration funds to basic research," Press said, "it would have little impact on demonstrations but it would add up to a 10 per cent boost for basic research."

Asked whether Congress might balk at the executive branch unilaterally shifting funds that had been appropriated for specific purposes, Press replied, "These ideas are not foreign to Congressional committees." But he added that the practice of trying to view the federal research enterprise as a whole is relatively

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In Brief

The Office of Technology Assessment is astir with internal politics. At the request of Senator Kennedy, chairman of the OTA board, OTA's advisory council is going to conduct a thoroughgoing review of the organization. Chairman of the council is MIT President Jerome Wiesner, an old Kennedy ally. Wiesner became chairman in January 1976 when his longtime colleague Harold Brown, now Secretary of Defense, relinquished the post, and accused OTA of inept performance, inefficiency — and neglect of the council (SGR Vol. VI, No. 12).

Also at OTA: J. Fred Bucy, president of Texas Instruments, got turned down for reappointment to the advisory council earlier this year when Board Chairman Kennedy pointed out that Bucy had attended only 16 per cent of the council's meetings during his four-year term. Bucy was backed by the former chairman, Rep. Olin Teague (D-Texas), a staunch defender of the OTA management.

Edward E. David Jr., White House science adviser from 1970 to 1973, has been appointed president of the Exxon Research and Engineering Co. Following his government service, David served for three years as executive vice president of Gould, a mid-west industrial conglomerate. Last February, he went into private consulting. "I had planned to stay with that," he told SGR, "but the Exxon offer presented an opportunity I couldn't refuse."

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new. "Ford's last budget contained an across-the-board increase for all the government's basic research activities. That was the first time that approach was taken."

On the often-asked and sensitive question of how he and the office heads — the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) — fit into the scheme of things in the White House, Press is, of course, not a disinterested reporter. Influence in Washington comes from proximity to power, which accounts for the news media's obsession with how often the President sees whom. (From this logging of minutes spent visiting the Oval Office comes those profiles that have so far identified at least half a dozen persons as the Second Most Powerful Person in Washington). In any case, Science Adviser Press does, in fact, get to see Mr. Carter reasonably often; furthermore he is one of 50 or so federal officials who can get a memo to the President in a matter of hours — a system that Press says he uses once or twice a week. As for face-to-face encounters, Press said that in his three months in Washington, he has met twice alone with the President, and on five other occasions has been a member of "small groups" that met with the President. In addition, Press attends the regular Monday morning cabinet meeting, plus the daily White House senior staff meeting, which the President attends about once a week.

Whatever the outcome of these encounters, Press does not sound like a man who feels shut off from the boss.

Later this month, the President will announce a White House staff reorganization that is intended to symbolize the lean style of operation that he wishes to extend to the entire federal establishment. Press told SGR that he does not know how OSTP will fare in the reorganization, but on his own, he has been following Carter's cues. Though the OSTP legislation calls for up to four presidentially appointed associate directors for the office, Press said that he will get along without any. The reason, he explained, is that neither the National Security Council nor the Domestic Council are eligible for such high-level staff appointments, "and it would just be too asymmetrical if we had them." He has, however, made three appointments that bear the title of senior policy analyst. They are: Anne Keatley, responsible for OSTP international affairs, who was formerly staff director of the Committee for Scholarly Communications with the People's Republic of China, of which Press was chairman at the time of his appointment; Ted Greenwood, an MIT political scientist, who will handle energy and national security, and Raphael Kasper, an environmental specialist, formerly with the National Academy of Sciences, who will be in charge of energy and environment.

Press said that he has sent to the President a list of candidates for the President's Committee on Science and Technology, which was created under the OSTP legislation to conduct a two-year study of federal science policies and organization. Appointed in the Ford Administration, the Committee went out of business earlier this year when its pro forma resignations were unexpectedly accepted by Carter (SGR Vol. VII, No. 5). Press, however, doesn't expect the President to re-establish the group, and apparently is not concerned about it. The functions of the committee, he said, can be performed by his own staff with the assistance of outside consultants.

Finally, Press, former chairman of MIT's department of earth and planetary sciences, offered the following "message" to the scientific community: "I've lived their way for 27 years," he said, "and I know the worst

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Dr. Press Evaluates the Boss

What does Science Adviser Frank Press think of President Jimmy Carter's ability to understand scientific and technical issues?

"In the energy area," Press said, "the President understands all the technical issues. In other areas, the discipline that he got through his technical training shows through in the quantitative approach that he takes. It also shows through in his ability to say, 'I don't know,' when he doesn't know."

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ISSN 0048-9581

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Independently published by *Science & Government Report*, Inc., twice monthly, except once each in January, July and August. Annual Subscription: Institutions, $75 (two years, $140); individuals, $44 (two years, $75). Editorial offices at 3736 Kanawha St., N.W., Washington, DC 20015. Tel. (202) 244-4135. Second class postage paid at Washington, DC. Please address all subscription correspondence to Box 6226A, Northwest Station, Washington, DC 20015. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. SGR is available on Xerox University Microfilms.

Academy Seeks Aid for 8 Oppressed Scientists

In a move long urged by some of its members and a few outside critics, the National Academy of Sciences last month announced its support for scientists who are victims of repressive political regimes. Specifically, the Academy singled out eight of them, in three countries, for its support.

The public statement of support, announced in a press conference called by the Academy's new Committee on Human Rights, marks a major change from the Academy's usual style of private, behind-the-scenes talks with foreign officials on behalf of politically harrassed scientists, a style which has been defended in the past by Academy President Philip Handler.

The Committee on Human Rights, chaired by Robert W. Kates, a geographer from Clark University, was formed a year ago, following a public argument between Handler and Jeremy J. Stone, Director of the Federation of American Scientists (FAS). Stone had accused Handler of refusing to meet with dissident Soviet scientists during a visit to Moscow, and he criticized the Academy for being too timid in failing to speak out publicly in support of scientists whose human rights are violated.

Stone, who was campaigning at the time on behalf of a number of Soviet "refusenik" scientists, followed up his complaints with a letter to Academy members soliciting their support for FAS-organized petitions. Handler was said to have been enraged by this attempt to borrow the Academy's prestige, but Stone nevertheless uncovered a relatively large body of support. He says he received more than 150 positive responses.

Stone's prodding from the outside, coupled with agitation from the inside by a few activist members such as Lipman Bers, a Columbia University mathematician, paid off. A year ago, at the 1976 annual meeting, the Academy's Council adopted a set of guidelines governing future Academy responses to acts of political repression of scientists, and it established the Committee on Human Rights to put the guidelines into effect. Though the guidelines indicated that the Academy would continue to use quiet diplomacy as its chief mode of action, sterner measures, including public statements, were not ruled out.

The committee, whose members are all members of the Academy itself, include Bers, Franklin Long, and Nobel Laureate Christian Anfinsen. It began by sending a letter to other Academy members, asking whether they would be prepared to support appeals on behalf of specific scientists. The letter has so far produced 258 positive responses, nearly one-quarter of the Academy's membership.

In view of the momentum that seemed to be building up inside the Academy for a more aggresive policy to defend human rights, it is thus not surprising that the committee has issued a public statement and seems to be taking an active role. And, according to remarks made by some committee members at last month's press conference, such public appeals are likely to become more commonplace.

The specific action taken last month was to announce the Academy's support for five Argentine scientists, a Uruguayan mathematician, and two Soviet scientists, all of whom are "victims of grave official harrassment for political reasons." The committee is also soliciting support for the scientists from the American scientific community.

The five Argentines all disappeared last year, and it is assumed that they were arrested. The Argentine government claims to have no knowledge of them, and thus the Academy is requesting information on their status and whereabouts, and asking that their family and representatives of the scientific community be allowed to visit them. There is, however, no guarantee that the five are even alive.

The Uruguayan mathematician, Jose Luis Massera, was arrested in October 1975, held incommunicado for a year, and is now being tried for "subversive association." An avowed Communist, Massera has been subjected to severe torture, according to Bers, and his trial is taking place behind closed doors. The Academy is again asking for visiting rights for Massera's family and for members of the scientific community, and for observers to be permitted at his trial.

As for the two Soviet scientists, they are Sergei Kovalev, a distinguished biologist now serving seven years' hard labor and three years' exile on charges of acts against the Soviet State, and Yuriy Orlov, a

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of the proposal treadmill, submitting annual applications and when it's time to submit another one, you still haven't heard back on the first. I'd like to explore multi-year commitments — if we can get the money." The theme was that, as one who spent his career in the academic community, he is sympathetic to its problems and will do all he can to be of assistance.

But he added: "I'm also a member of the President's team, and my job is to give him the best R&D program that can be bought with the amount of money he decides to spend." —DSG

Committees Win Delay for Recombinant Bills

Committees in the House and the Senate last week abruptly cancelled mark-up sessions on recombinant DNA legislation to allow more time for discussion of some of the controversial issues involved.

Staff members said that lobbying on the bills from the scientific community has been intense, and some committee members have expressed concern that the bills were being railroaded through. The committees were striving to meet new Congressional budget deadlines which specify that bills authorizing federal expenditures must be reported out of committee by May 15, but last week they received verbal assurances from the Budget committees that an exception would be made in this case.

The delay came as some major differences were beginning to appear between the House and Senate versions. A bill already approved in outline by the House subcommittee on Health and Environment, for example, would place much of the authority for regulating recombinant DNA experiments in the hands of local biohazards committees, while a bill drafted by staff members of the Senate Health subcommittee would establish a new federal regulatory commission to control the research.

The House subcommittee held one drafting session on May 3, at which the committee members approved the major elements to be included in the legislation. The subcommittee was due to meet again last week to approve the specific language.

At the May 3 meeting, the subcommittee agreed that the Secretary of HEW should be empowered to write new regulations governing recombinant DNA regulations, and that an advisory committee should be established to help draft and oversee the implementation of the regulations. The subcommittee also approved the idea that facilities in which recombinant DNA experiments are performed must be licensed by HEW.

A key feature of the outline legislation is that local biohazards committees, consisting of scientists, lay members, and community representatives, should be responsible for approving individual projects. Only those projects which would require high containment (so-called P4) facilities would require special approval from the Secretary of HEW.

By contrast, a bill drafted by staff members of the Senate Health subcommittee would require that a regulatory commission be established to draft regulations, grant licenses, and approve projects.

Though both versions are subject to considerable change, they represent a radically different approach to regulating the research.

On another controversial matter — whether federal regulations should pre-empt state and local controls — the embryo House and Senate versions also differ. The House draft would allow state and local governments to set more stringent regulations only if the Secretary of HEW agrees that the extra controls are "necessary in order to provide reasonable protection of human health and the environment." Since that's exactly what the HEW regulations would be designed to accomplish,

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physicist who was arrested earlier this year for his activities in support of human rights in the Soviet Union. Orlov has not yet been formally charged. In these two cases, the Academy committee has written to the Soviet Ambassador in Washington asking for commutation of Kovalev's sentence to the time he has already served, and for more detailed information about Orlov's status, his place of detention, and so forth.

The eight scientists were chosen because of the urgency of their cases and because the Academy has relatively full information on their circumstances. Kates noted at the press conference that "they are at best symbolic of the thousands of scientists who are subject to repression," and he indicated that the committee would take similar action on other cases when it has gathered sufficient information.

Asked whether the committee would take sterner measures if these appeals fail to produce a satisfactory response, Kates indicated that the committee will adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude. So far, there has been no serious discussion of the possibility of breaking off scientific exchange agreements with countries which persist in acts of political repression against scientists, he said.

The Academy's public defense of harrassed scientists stands in marked contrast to the declared policies of the Royal Society of London. In an address to Royal Society members last November, Lord Todd, the Society's President, said that though he is disturbed about the apparent increase in acts of political repression, the Royal Society would not make public pronouncements on individual cases. Royal Society officials can do more good, Todd said, by making private representations on behalf of victims of political repression than they could "by subscribing to or issuing public declarations" (SGR Vol. VII, No. 1). Such statements are not too dissimilar from those made early last year by Academy President Handler.—CN

House, Senate Split on Authorization for NSF

Though the authorization bill for the National Science Foundation (NSF) survived passage through both the House and the Senate this year without the usual potshots at funny-sounding research titles, it is nevertheless likely to be the subject of a lengthy tussle in conference committee.

Last year, it took more than three months for House-Senate conferees to settle their differences on the bill, and this year the potential sticking points are likely to be even more numerous.

The most glaring difference in the bills is that the Senate, with virtually no explanation given in either the committee report or in the floor debate, has authorized expenditures for two fiscal years, 1978 and 1979, while the House has followed the usual practice of authorizing funds for only one year. Though there has been some discussion in the past of the potential merits of two-year authorizations, the matter was given no discussion in the House Committee on Science and Technology, and House conferees are therefore very unlikely to accept the Senate's figures. For the record, the Senate bill authorizes $1.057 billion for NSF in 1979.

As for the 1978 figures, the usual pattern is emerging in which the House has cut the Administration's request, the Senate has added to it, and the conference committee is expected to arrive at a compromise which won't be much different from the Administration's request, which totaled $885 million.

The most difficult point to resolve in the bill is again likely to be the authorization for the so-called Science for Citizens program, an effort inspired by Senator Edward Kennedy, whose subcommittee of the Senate Human Resources Committee handles the NSF authorization bill. Designed to encourage public understanding of, and participation in, policy issues involving science and technology, the program was a major bone of contention in last year's authorization bill.

The problem, in short, is that some House members, led by Rep. Mike McCormack (D-Wash.), are generally unconvinced of the merits of the program and specifically concerned that it may be used to finance public interest groups. Kennedy, on the other hand, has long championed the cause of public participation in science policymaking, and he is an enthusiastic supporter of the program.

Last year, the Senate version of the NSF authorization bill earmarked $3 million for the Science for Citizens program, while the House version approved only $300,000. After extensive negotiation, a final figure of $1.2 million was agreed on. This year, the two sides are even further apart. The Senate version authorizes $5 million, and specifically states that some of the money should be used to support "citizens groups," while the House version contains only $100,000, bars use of the funds to aid public interest outfits, and specifies that the money be used only to evaluate projects funded last year. The battle lines are therefore drawn and feelings are said to run high on both sides.

Another item likely to be controversial is a provision inserted in the Senate bill by Kennedy which specifies that industry should be able to compete on an equal footing with universities for NSF's basic research funds. Though there's no current prohibition on using NSF funds to support industrial research, NSF officials have generally given priority to grant applicants from academe, at least for basic research support. (Industry has, however, shared to a large extent in applied research funds channeled through the RANN program).

The equal-access provision in the Senate bill has disturbed many scientists and university administrators who fear that it will put more pressure on universities' already hard-pressed research budgets. Though the House Science and Technology committee did not address the matter during its consideration of the NSF bill, some committee members are said to be sympathetic to the concerns of academic scientists, and will oppose the provision in the conference committee.

According to a House staff analysis of the two versions of the bills, they contain a total of 33 policy issues, and there is agreement between the House and Senate on only four of them.

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state and local governments would have a hard time convincing HEW to allow them to set more stringent controls. In short, the House version comes close to endorsing the concept of federal pre-emption.

There are several different versions of the pre-emption clause under discussion in the Senate committee, and it is not yet clear which version will prevail.

Though no timetable has been set for the committees to act, it is likely to be early June before the bills are put into final form. An added complication could then arise, for the House Committee on Science and Technology has requested that the legislation be referred to it for consideration, and the House Judiciary committee is also said to be interested in taking a look at criminal penalties in the legislation for willful violation of the regulations. —CN

US, Israel Set Up Foundation to Support Industrial Research

Buried deep in that $29 billion supplemental appropriation bill that President Carter signed May 4 was a provision setting up an unusual, if not unique, US-Israeli foundation to support industrial research collaboration between firms in the two countries.

Known as the Binational Industrial Research and Development Foundation (BIRD), the new organization is modeled after a science foundation that the US and Israel established several years ago for basic research in Israel of interest to the two nations. The big difference with BIRD, however, is that it is mainly aimed at encouraging profit-making firms in the US to contract for research with Israeli organizations.

As was the case with the science foundation, BIRD is financed through bookkeeping acrobatics involving funds that Israel owes the US for past purchases of surplus agriculture products. Each side is ostensibly putting $30 million into an endowment for the Foundation, but the US share is coming from prepayment of part of the agricultural debt that Israel owes the US. The total fund will be kept on deposit in Israel, at an interest rate that is expected to yield about $2.5 million a year.

The Foundation will be headed by a six-member board of governors, evenly divided between the two countries. The US members are from the Treasury, State, and Commerce departments, the last of which is the "lead" agency for handling the program at this end. For additional information, contact: Jordan Baruch, assistant secretary for science and technology, Department of Commerce, Washington, DC 20230.

OTA Panel to Examine Saccharin Controversy

With an assortment of odd bedfellows exploiting the proposed saccharin ban to undermine the Delaney amendment, Senator Edward Kennedy is trying to cool the issue with a quick study that an expert panel of scientists and physicians will perform for the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA).

The proposed ban on the artificial sweetener has evoked one of the biggest letter writing campaigns to hit Congress in recent times. A lot of it is self-generated but a good deal has been inspired by full-page newspaper ads by the Calorie Control Council, a trade association dominated by soft-drink manufacturers. In addition, the ban has been undercut by various other guardians of the public health, among them the American Cancer Society, which, cigarettes excepted, prefers to avoid clashes with industry. (ACS states in its latest annual report that Coca-Cola helped foot the bill for ACS staff members to visit the Soviet Union last year).

In any case, sacchrin-induced passions are running high on Capital Hill, and against that background, Kennedy, who chairs the OTA board, has employed a tactic that worked well two years ago when Congress was moving to ban all experiments on fetuses — he's ordered a study. In the earlier case, he moved successfully to establish a national commission that eventually came in with compromise recommendations that substantially deflated the issue and permitted most fetal research to continue.

In the case of saccharin, the study will be done for OTA by an 11-member panel, chaired by Frederick C. Robbins, dean of Case Western Reserve Medical School. The panel, which has been asked to report before the end of June, has been assigned to examine four fundamental issues; if they respond with decisive findings, one way or the other, it could be live or die for both the saccharin ban and the Delaney amendment, which prohibits the addition to human foodstuffs of any substances found to cause cancer in animals.

The panel's tasks, as stated in an OTA announcement are as follows:

(1) Assess the capacity of current testing methodology to predict the carcinogenic potential of chemicals consumed by humans, with special reference to the validity of extrapolating from the results of animal tests to possible human effects.

(2) Evaluate and quantify, insofar as possible, the potential risk that saccharin consumption might cause cancer in humans.

(3) In view of the current methods for measuring health benefits of dietary behavior, evaluate the potential benefits, including psychological, of saccharin availability to the general public and to diabetics and other groups with special medical problems.

(4) Assess the potential availability of alternate artificial sweetners.

The other members of the panel are:

John J. Burns, Hoffman LaRoche, Inc.
Robert A. Good, Sloan-Kettering
David Kipnis, Washington University School of Medicine
Gilbert A. Leveille, Michigan State University
Brian MacMahon, Harvard School of Public Health
Joyce C. McCann, University of California, Berkeley
Abraham E. Nizel, Tufts University School of Dental Medicine
John A. Oates, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
Irving J. Selikoff, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine
Albert J. Stunkard, Philadelphia General Hospital

Research Role Urged for CIA Salvage Vessel

Having recently determined that the Glomar Explorer, the former CIA salvage vessel, could be converted into a sophisticated drilling ship for about half the cost of buying a new one (SGR Vol. VII, No. 7), the National Science Foundation will soon receive a proposal for its use in a major international research program costing about $400 million over the next decade.

The proposal, which has been drafted by an international committee of earth scientists, is now being circulated within the scientific community, and it is expected to be made public in the next few weeks. It would entail continued use of the present drilling vessel, the Glomar Challenger, to drill in relatively shallow sites until 1984, coupled with conversion of the Explorer and its use, beginning in 1981, to drill rock samples in areas which lie outside the limits of the Challenger.

Though the management and funding for the proposed program have yet to be worked out, NSF will probably be asked to meet most of the operating costs and perhaps all the cost entailed in converting the Glomar Explorer.

The proposal is being developed by a committee of earth scientists representing institutions which are now participating in the Deep Sea Drilling Project (DSDP), a research effort which has recovered thousands of rock samples from the ocean floor in many parts of the world since it began in 1968.

The DSDP, which is focused on the Glomar Challenger, has recently been turned into an international project, with NSF providing the lion's share of the funds, but with Britain, France, Japan, West Germany, and the USSR each contributing $1 million a year. The program is due to end in 1979, however, and thus the new proposal is designed as a follow-up effort to the DSDP.

The committee drafting the proposal was established last year by the institutes taking part in the DSDP, and it was chaired by Manik Talwani, a geophysicist from the Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory of Columbia University. Its preliminary report has been approved in principle by an executive committee which manages the DSDP, and it will soon officially be forwarded to NSF.

Because there is a risk of striking oil and gas along the continental margins, heavy equipment to prevent blowouts would be required. Similarly, a ship capable of operating long drill strings would be required for drilling in the ocean trenches, and work at high latitudes would require a thick-hulled and very stable vessel. The Challenger is not robust enough for such work, but the Explorer would do nicely, the committee says.

The committee is anxious that there be no hiatus in the program when the present phase of the DSDP ends, and thus it recommends that the Glomar Challenger be kept in operation until 1984. The Explorer would then be fitted with a blowout preventer and undergo conversion into a drilling ship, ready to start drilling at the more inaccessible and intriguing sites in 1981.

The cost of such a program would be about $396 million over a ten-year period ending in 1988, the committee reckons. That estimate does not include the cost of refitting the Glomar Explorer, however, a sum which NSF calculates would be about $52 million. The committee urges in its report that the program should be undertaken only if there is a guarantee that a specific proportion of the operating costs would be spent on site surveys and sample analyses.

Though the committee's report isn't explicit about the arrangements under which such a program would be conducted, it anticipates that it would be some sort of international endeavor.

HEW Gets New Health Chief

Secretary Joseph A. Califano Jr. has another recruit for what has turned out to be the most shunned position in the federal bureaucracy, assistant secretary for health in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The newly landed appointee is Julius B. Richmond, a multi-titled Harvard medical educator who learned his way around Washington as founder and first director of Project Head Start.

The fact that Richmond took Califano's offer is some counter to the general impression that the Secretary has stripped the assistant secretary's office of any real power. That's said to be the reason why at least three medical luminaries turned it down flat and also why a previous recruit, Christopher Columbus Fordham III, held it for a month and then quit (SGR Vol. VII, No. 8).

Fordham, dean of medicine at the University of North Carolina, cited only "deep personal reasons" in his letter of departure. But his brief stay, as a consultant, pending formal appointment and confirmation, was not reassuring. All the major appointments that the assistant secretary normally handles were made prior to his arrival, and many major health policy decisions were also proclaimed without his involvement.

Richmond, of course, faces the same situation of the team and policies having been assembled. Just what lured him back to Washington is not known, but having experienced the Head Start battles, he's no novice in Washington's ways, and it's doubtful that he came merely to occupy a big executive suite and sit silently at meetings.

Academy Opposes Local DNA Research Rules

The National Academy of Sciences usually steers clear of overt lobbying designed to influence legislation pending before Congress, but at its annual meeting, held during the last week of April, it broke that tradition in a major way.

Academy members approved a resolution, drafted chiefly by MIT biologists David Balitmore and Alexander Rich, expressing concern about some legislative proposals to regulate recombinant DNA research. The resolution urges Congress to write into the recombinant DNA bill a provision prohibiting state and local governments from setting their own controls on the research.

Proceeding from the viewpoint that recombinant DNA guidelines developed by the National Institutes of Health are "the result of careful deliberation," the resolution urges "their simple conversion into a uniform national set of regulations."

Though the resolution states that it would at least be "reasonable" for local communities "to participate in supervising adherence to regulations," it states that "The research institutions of the country constitute an important national resource, and differing local options could subject that resource to arbitrary regulations. Overly restricting this type of research would severely degrade the capability of biomedical research and limit its contribution to the public welfare. In essence, it would allow a local community to affect a critical component of national policy."

The resolution also expresses concern about a provision in a draft bill before the Senate Human Resources Committee which would establish a new regulatory commission to control recombinant DNA experiments, suggesting that such a commission represents "a wholly new and unfortunate departure."

The resolution was sponsored by 13 Academy members, several of whom have previously spoken out against strict controls on the research. But it also contains one surprising sponsor, Robert Sinsheimer, head of the biology department at Caltech, and one of the leading critics of the research. Asked last week why he signed the resolution, Sinsheimer said that he supports uniform controls on the scientific basis that any hazard that might arise from the research would not respect local political boundaries. He added, however, that his support for the resolution should not necessarily be interpreted as support for the NIH guidelines.

In addition to approving the resolution, the Academy's members also heard Academy President Philip Handler make a few intemperate remarks about the recombinant DNA debate during his annual report. Though Handler said that he has reluctantly concluded that legislation to regulate recombinant DNA is inevitable, he suggested that "it is profoundly ironic that this extraordinarily serious step should be taken in order to avoid hazards which, as best I can ascertain, exist largely in the imaginations of a very small group of scientists." He added: "Those who have inflamed the public imagination by their rhetoric have raised fears that rest on no factual basis but their own science fiction," and concluded that however the specifics of legislation may turn out, "our successors will rue the day this legislation was passed."

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